

ВОПРОСЫ ИСТОРИИ МЕДИЦИНЫ

UDC 61(091);61(092)

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EPONYMOUS AND NO LONGER ANONYMOUS: HARD LIFE AND LONG FAME OF RUSSIAN PHYSICIANS. PROCEEDING III. WHO WAS DR. ABRAMOV?

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The article is devoted to biographies of three Russian physicians of the Silver Age (a period in the History of Russian culture between 1890 and 1917). They made early, significant and internationally recognized contributions to medical science and became eponymous, although the twentieth century's social disasters were to deeply impact their subsequent lives and careers, obscuring their contributions to the global medical community. The biography and academic achievements of S.S. Abramov (1875–1951), a Russian pathologist, microbiologist and immunologist of Armenian origin, discoverer of primary idiopathic myocarditis, are reviewed in the third proceeding. The contribution of this scientist to Medicine is analyzed in the context of its historical epoch forming the background of his individual social choices. Besides his eponymous description, other medical contributions of this scholar are listed, such as his possible priority in the description of dilated cardiomyopathy and his authorship of the first textbook of Pathology in the history of Bulgarian science. Factors facilitating rapid development of theoretical and practical Medicine in late 19th and early 20th century imperial Russia are discussed, for example, cultural symbiosis in a multinational country. The conclusion of the author is that in any epoch, even the most cruel and unfavorable one, creative activity is a path to social immortality. Refs 27. Figs 6.

Keywords: Sergei Semionovich Abramov, Abramov-Fiedler myocarditis, History of Medicine, Mikhail Nikiforovich Nikiforov, Russian medical emigration, Sofia University, Armenians in Russia.

ЭПОНИМИЗИРОВАННЫЕ, НО БОЛЕЕ НЕ АНОНИМНЫЕ: ТРУДНАЯ ЖИЗНЬ И ДОЛГАЯ СЛАВА РОССИЙСКИХ ВРАЧЕЙ. СООБЩЕНИЕ III. КТО БЫЛ ДОКТОР АБРАМОВ?

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Статья посвящена биографиям российских врачей Серебряного века (период в истории русской культуры между 1890 и 1917 гг.). Они внесли значительный, международно признанный вклад в медицинскую науку и были увековечены в эпонимах, хотя социальные бедствия XX в. глубоко и пагубно отразились на их последующей жизни и карьере, из-за чего их роль в дальнейшем оказалась скрыта для мирового медицинского сообщества. Третье сообщение посвящено биографии и научным достижениям русского патолога, микробиолога и иммунолога, первооткрывателя первичного идиопатического миокардита С. С. Абрамова (1875–1951). Вклад этого ученого в медицину анализируется в контексте исторической эпохи, на фоне его

индивидуального социального выбора. Кроме эпонимических описаний, анализируются медицинские достижения этого ученого: в частности, его возможный приоритет в описании дилатационной кардиомиопатии и создание им первого учебника патологии в истории болгарской науки. В статье обсуждаются факторы, способствовавшие быстрому развитию теоретической и практической медицины в имперской России конца XIX — начала XX в., в частности симбиоз культур многонациональной страны. Автор заключает, что в любую эпоху, даже самую жестокую и неблагоприятную, творчество открывает путь к социальному бессмертию. Библиогр. 27 назв. Ил. 6.

Ключевые слова: Сергей Семенович Абрамов, миокардит Абрамова—Фидлера, история медицины, Михаил Никифорович Никифоров, русская медицинская эмиграция, Софийский университет, армяне в России.

The period between 1890 and 1917 in the history of Russian science and culture is called “Silver Age”. Within the terms of Cultural Studies, it is defined as archeo-modern, when Russian society went into modernity, still keeping many cultural archetypes from the pre-modern Past [1]. It was a time of rapid progress and vanguard innovations not only in domestic Arts, but in literature, and science as well. It brought global fame to many Russian intellectuals, beginning from Nobel Prize winners in Medicine Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1849–1936) and Ilya Il'ich Mechnikov (1845–1916) and ending with coryphaei of Russian ballet and forerunners of the world Visual Arts. These were not only ethnic Russians, but representatives of many nations of multinational country. The passionate overheating of that epoch resulted in three Russian revolutions. Finally, World War I and Civil War in Russia have stopped or redirected this rise of Russian thought, crushed the Russian Empire, and gave birth to Soviet Republic. For many creative intellectuals these events were fatal or turned their energy on survival, so after very bright and early debut in creative work their footprints were later lost in history, and sometimes the West knows only their surnames, if remembers them at all [2]. At the same time, they hold undoubted global priority in many areas, including Medicine. I am writing to fill this gap.

A creative person always is strong enough to create something new in some area of life, but not necessarily has the capacity and motivation to fight against common adverse way of living or transform society. Some medical doctors were also revolutionaries, prominent radical politicians, guerrilla commanders and fought against unbearable social system vigorously, sometimes forcibly, sacrificing life. The examples are numerous and include physicians of different nations: Jean-Paul Marat (1743–1793), Ernesto Guevara de la Serna (1928–1967), Salvador Allende Gossens (1908–1973), Antonio Agostinho Neto (1922–1979), Mohammad Najibullah (1947–1996), Nikolay Ernestovich Bauman (1873–1905), Radovan Karadzic (born 1945), as well as the representatives of junior and middle medical personnel: Samora Moisés Machel (1933–1986) and Nikolai Aleksandrovich Schors (1895–1919). But many of them were innovative evolutionists rather than revolutionaries. Having space and time hostile for creative life, and not able to select another time for living, they simply performed space change or emigration.

There is a special, often fatal, and still not entirely understood kind of myocarditis with giant cells, called Abramov–Fiedler myocarditis. In later literature it was concluded that Abramov described dilated cardiomyopathy, and Fiedler — primary diffuse myocarditis, both with severe course and immunopathological component of pathogenesis [3]. Life and deeds of Karl-Ludwig Alfred Fiedler (1835–1921), who described it as idiopathic disease in German literature (1900) [4], are well known to medical community and avail-

able elsewhere [5], but his Russian colleague, who published original description 3 years prior to Fiedler's one [6], is much less known. Even Russian sources in Soviet period just mentioned him as "domestic physician of late XIX — early XX century" [7], without details or dates of his life. But now we know much more of his hectic life of a refugee.



Fig.1. Young S.S. Abramov [12]



Fig. 2. Central square of Nakhichevan-on-Don city in the beginning of XX century [12]

A typical figure of those years, lived a life of a wanderer: *Sergei Semionovich Abramov* (fig. 1) was born on 14 September 1875 to the family of a municipal official, in the southern city of Nakhichevan'-on-Don, located near Rostov-on-Don (today it is part of Rostov city) (fig. 2). His father was of Armenian origin. His great-grandfather Ivan Ovanesovich Abramyan born in the town of Theodosia, Crimea, was an officer of A. V. Suvorov's army, took part in Russian-Turkish wars and when Empress Catherine the Great invited Crimean Armenians, deported from Turkish Crimea, to re-settle into Novorossiia, he became a deputy of Armenian community, who brought from Saint Petersburg on 26 November 1779 a decree of Empress gifting to Crimean Armenians territories for a new settlement and some privileges. More then 20 000 of them moved into Russia. They founded there in 1779 new Nor-Nakhichevan' city, and retired lieutenant-colonel I. O. Abramyan became its first Mayor. In 1795 he achieved a "gratitude letter" of local community. But, due to conflict with clericals he was finally dismissed from his position. Later on I. O. Abramyan (as an owner of wool and silk factories and a mill) headed local guild of merchants and in 1813 was buried near local Surb Nikohaios Church as a honorary citizen [8–9].

Soon after Sergei's birth his family moved to Rostov-on-Don, where he has grown up. He entered Khar'kov University (Mechnikov's alma mater), later transferred to Moscow University and graduated from its Medical Faculty with honors in 1899. Abramov described a case of special myocarditis with cardiomegaly and its autopsy picture as early as in 1897, while being a medical student [6]. Because of his gift and inclination to Anatomic Pathology, after graduation he has got a stipend for postgraduate fellowship in this field. In 1899–1901 Abramov worked at the Department of Anatomic Pathology under the guidance of eminent pathologist and bacteriologist, one of the discoverers of spleen functioning as bacterial filter in circulation, Professor Mikhail Nikiforovich Nikiforov (1858–1915). The teacher of Abramov was a founder of glorious domestic pathomorphological school: among his pupils were also H. V. Davydovsky, A. I. Abrikosov, V. T. Talalaev — all

later became outstanding Soviet pathomorphologists [10]. M. N. Nikiforov also became eponymous for his invention of Nikiforov's mixture (96 % ethanol and diethyl ether, taken half by half for fixation of tissues and smears) (fig. 3). In 1902 Abramov returned to Rostov-on-Don, where he worked as a dissector at Nikolayevskaya hospital, recently (1890) established on the border of his two home cities. At his own expense he built there the first prosectorium in the history of the whole region of Southern Russia (1902–1903). The facility was in function until 1915, when (during German occupation of Poland) Emperor's Warsaw University with its advanced pathomorphological units was evacuated to Rostov-on-Don [11]. Abramov's Ph.D. Thesis was dedicated to pathogenesis of jaundice in different liver disorders (1905). He defended it at Moscow University. In 1906 he was elected for the position of Privatdozent of Anatomic Pathology there and in 1906–1908 lectured in Anatomic Pathology and Bacteriology. He combined academic activities with practical work of dissector.

Until 1910 he continued to maintain his prosectorium at Rostov-on-Don, but later left his native city and passed this responsibility to a younger colleague, doctor A. N. Obratsov. To that moment prosectorium established by Abramov has been already developed into Bacteriological Institution with an autopsy unit. Abramov continued his work in Moscow, at Saint Sophia's Pediatric Hospital (1908–1912), at Moscow General Military Hospital (1912–1918) and also at Moscow Orphanage (1912–1920) [12]. He was not "pure" anatomic pathologist in the sense of XIX age. His sphere of academic and research interests included experimental Immunology and Microbiology. As early as in 1897–98 he published a brochure about preventive vaccination, which was a frontier of innovative Medicine for that period. A book, published in Tiflis, provoked a hot discussion with his senior and apparently more conservative colleague Associate Professor Barykin [12–13]. Later, in 1909–1919 S. S. Abramov headed the Laboratory of Experimental Pathology and Sera Testing at the Moscow Bacteriological Institute, under the guidance of well known Russian bacteriologist Filipp Markovich Blumenthal (1859–1927), one of the pioneers of Phthisiology in Russia [14–15]. Dr. Abramov published several papers in Bacteriology, including a monograph on pathogenesis of diphtheria and a practicum in Bacteriology, very popular among specialists (this book of 1916 he dedicated to the memory "of deeply honored teacher M. N. Nikiforov") (fig. 4). Abramov's most significant contribution into Microbiology and Infectious Pathology was a notorious guide "Pathogenic Microorganisms", claimed by physicians and republished at least 6 times in Russia and abroad [16–17]. Since August, 1918 he was appointed Academic Secretary of Moscow University. As a Professor of Bacteriology, Abramov part-time collaborated with Moscow State Higher Medical School for Women (1913–1919); this school later became 2nd Moscow Medical University.

During Civil War in Russia he was appointed the head of laboratory at the Main Military Sanitary Administration of Red Army (1918). Before World War I (1909–1913)



М. Н. Никифоровъ.
Fig. 3. M. N. Nikiforov in 1913
[Available at: <http://all-photo.ru/portret/photos/26056-0.jpg>]

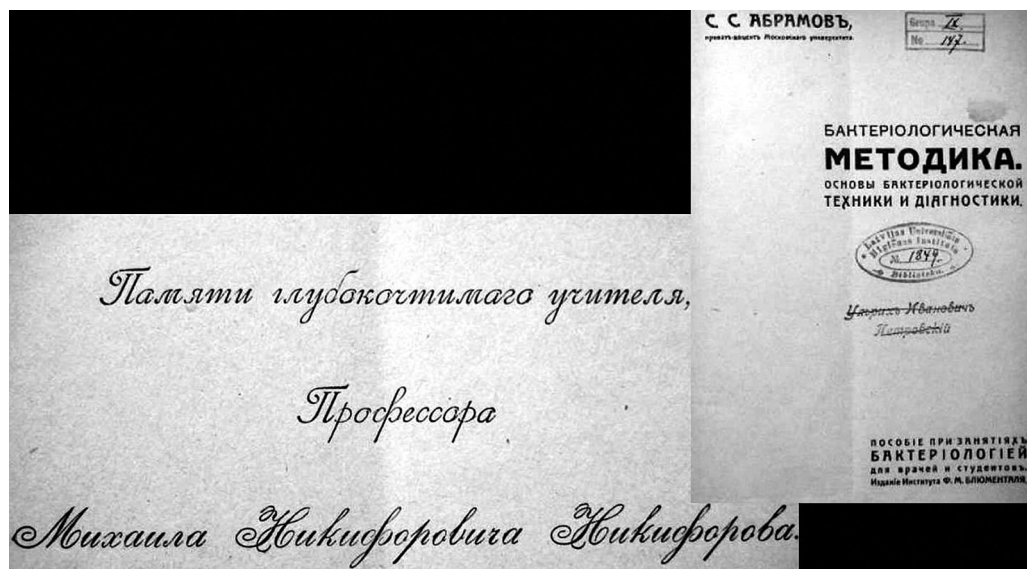


Fig. 4. Title page and dedication of S. S. Abramov's book [16]

Abramov performed several visits to leading foreign laboratories and Universities of Germany, France and Switzerland for staging and refreshing in Anatomic Pathology and Immunology, for example in 1910 he studied influence of pH on complement binding at Paul Ehrlich's lab in Germany [12, 15]. He kept there good academic relations. The period of Civil War was full of deprivation and, in Abramov's opinion, absolutely not suitable for academic work. This particular reason of emigration he later indicated in his immigrant's questionnaire [18]. Abramov used for escape an occasion of his detached duty to army during Soviet-Polish conflict of 1920 and escaped from Soviet Russia across the loose frontline, via Warsaw — to Berlin. More than a year he spent in the Berlin University, studying Pathomorphology of exanthemata and published a paper in this field [18–19]. Later he moved to Bulgaria, like many academic Russian emigrants of that period. Totally about 30 000 Russians moved to this friendly Slavic country after 1917. Mostly these were intellectuals or militaries and members of their families. Since 10 February 1921 till 20 December 1924 S. S. Abramov was first Chairman and Professor of the Department of General and Anatomic Pathology at the University of Sofia. Medical Faculty was just recently established there (1918) and half of its teachers (as well as 20 % of medical doctors in the country — more than 200 physicians) were refugees from Russia [20–21]. In Sofia Abramov published first ever Bulgarian textbook in Pathology (“The pathological processes”, 1923) [22] (fig. 5). S. S. Abramov trained first Bulgarian pathologists, who later replaced him in University of Sofia. He is still remembered by physicians and pathologists of this Balkan country [23–24] (fig. 6). In Sofia's medical community he was definitely one of the brightest figures, together with other Russian professors: prominent anatomist V. P. Vorobev (who later returned to the USSR and took central part in the project of Lenin's body preservation), another renowned anatomist I. F. Shapshal (author of the first Bulgarian textbook of Human Anatomy), histologist A. F. Man'kovsky (who lectured in Pathology before election of S. S. Abramov and immediately after his

departure), physiologist V.V. Zav'yalov, biochemist A.K. Medvedev, gynecologist G.E. Rein, psychiatrist N.M. Popov, neurologist A.E. Yanishevsky and few more scholars-refugees [21, 23–24]. Nevertheless, in 1924 S.S. Abramov, together with his spouse L.I. Abramova, moved to France and since 1925 worked at Russian Faculty of Sorbonne, where children of emigrants studied. Dr. Abramov was prolific writer, versatile and socially active person. He authored not only medical texts, but also a fiction novel “Fall of Acropolis”, and collaborated in public societies of Russian physicians abroad. In Germany he edited a Russian medical journal “Vrachebnoe Obozrenie” (Medical Review) and fruitfully worked with “Vrach” Publishers. German-Russian publishing house “Vrach” several times republished his textbook and atlas in infectious pathology. Another publisher, “Universal Russian Publishers” issued in Berlin Abramov’s books in current problems of Immunology (1921) and Gerontology (1921–1922). Also Abramov translated and commented for “Vrach” a German “Fundamentals of Anatomic Pathology” by H. Schmaus (1922–1923). In Bulgaria he was a Chairperson of the Society of Russian Physicians from the date of its foundation, in France he was among leaders of I.I. Mechnikov Society of Russian Physicians and among active members of Moscow University Alumni Society. After 1934 he concentrated on social activities. It is not surprising, that the Association of Russian Physicians Abroad during its 1st congress in Paris (1936) elected him Chairman of its Board. Unlike many Russian emigrants in France, he did not find enough courage to join the anti-fascist struggle and stood apart. In 1941–1945 Abramov lived and worked in Germany [12, 15, 21]. As an illegal emigrant from the Soviet Russia and resident of Nazi Germany, he did not expect a warm welcome in the USSR, so after victory of anti-Nazi coalition he preferred to leave Germany for USA, where he spent his last years, no longer academically active, in a small settlement of Hathaun [15] (by the way, not found by author on the map). He died on 21 August 1951.

Who knows, what heights could reach Russian Medicine if all these talented physicians of the Sil-

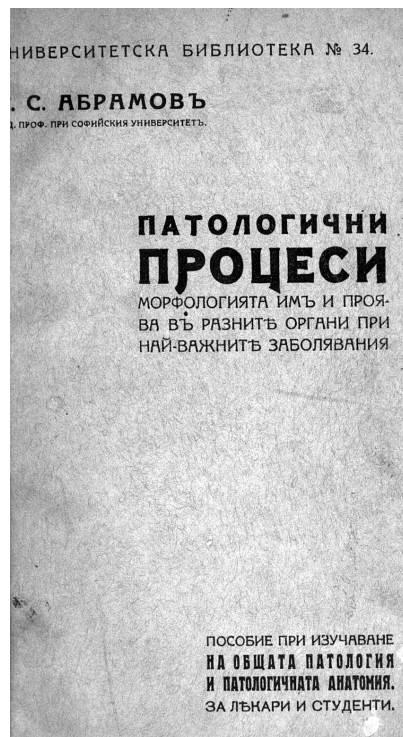


Fig. 5. First ever textbook of Pathology in Bulgarian language written by S.S. Abramov [22]

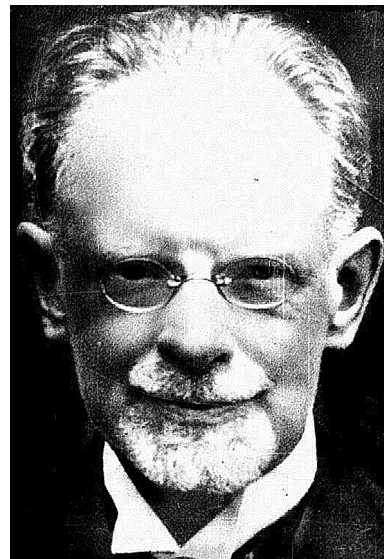


Fig. 6. S.S. Abramov during Bulgarian period of his academic career [24]

ver Age were not separated by Civil War on Reds and Whites, but for lifelong collaborated in domestic health care, like red and white blood cells in streaming blood? To resume this paper and the whole trilogy published [25–26], author feels most appropriate here the verses by a present-days Russian poet Alexander Semyonovich Kushner (b. 1936) [27]:

Your epoch is not for trying.
It's for living and for dying.
There is no blander pose
Than to bargain and protest,
As if times could these for those
Be exchanged upon request.
Every age seems Age of Iron,
But a garden shines inspiring...

Acknowledgements

Author has no conflict of interests. All contribution was made by a single author. Author is grateful to Prof. Ole-Daniel Enersen (Oslo, Norway) for his constant attention to the role of Russian physicians in the History of Medicine and for inclusion of the materials from this trilogy as well as from other author's texts about domestic scientists — into world known “Who named it?” Explanatory Dictionary of Medical Eponyms, edited by him [5].

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For citation: Churilov L. P. Eponymous and no longer anonymous: hard life and long fame of Russian physicians. Proceeding III. Who was Dr. Abramov? *Vestnik SPbSU. Series 11. Medicine*, 2016, issue 4, pp. 118–125. DOI: 10.21638/11701/spbu11.2016.411

Received: 11 February 2016

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